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NSC BRIEFING

7 September 1955

SATELLITE ARMY CUTS

- I. We consider the recent well-publicized series of announcements by various Eastern European satellites regarding cuts in their armed forces to be primarily a Bloc effort to give an appearance of substance to the current Soviet disarmament campaign. In our view, the Bloc hopes that these announcements will serve several important objectives:
- A. To bolster Soviet claims that the Bloc's military threat against the West is rapidly becoming non-existent.
 - B. To recapture public interest in the USSR's 10 May disarmament proposals and thereby divert world attention from the dramatic US proposal for aerial inspection.
 - C. In the long run, to weaken the resolve of Western nations to maintain a united position in matters of mutual defense and East-West negotiations.
- II. The present series of announcements was initiated by the USSR on 13 August with a statement that 640,000 men (or 16% of estimated total military manpower) would be cut from the Soviet armed forces by the end of 1955.
- A. Subsequent announcements by Czechoslovakia, Rumania and Poland (see Chart) have promised cuts on an average of 16 to 18 percent. The fourth satellite heard from--Albania, whose armed forces are already negligible--has promised a nearly 30% reduction. Hungary and Bulgaria, as yet unheard from, are expected to follow suit with similar headline-grabbing announcement.

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- III. As yet, we have no evidence regarding the way these cuts will be accomplished, although the annual release of conscripts whose service is complete begins this month in the USSR and its satellites. The 6 September press version of the Soviet release order--the first to be received--is no different from orders of previous years.
- A. However, we assume that more than the usual number of conscripts will be released.
- IV. We also expect that the cuts will be made in a manner that causes minimal losses in overall Bloc combat capabilities. Measures readily available to minimize such losses include:
- A. Limitation of any reduction to the lowest ranks of conscripts (thereby leaving the officer and non-com groups little affected).
- B. Expansion of training now given to pre-military age-groups (thereby improving the effectiveness of future conscript classes).
- C. Increased utilization of civilians in administrative and support roles (thereby eliminating use of uniformed personnel for a variety of non-combat functions).
- D. Skeletonization of selected divisions (thereby retaining key personnel, records and equipment for future mobilization purposes).
- E. In this connection, discharged conscripts in the USSR and the satellites are automatically transferred to the reserves (totaling, for ground forces, 6.5 million in the USSR and 2.8 million in the satellites).
1. The Bloc's mobilization plans are such that many divisions could be reduced to cadres without affecting Bloc capabilities in the initial phase of a war.

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